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The word for “Thank You” in Vietnamese is “Ca’m o’n pronounced “kom on”. I used this word often during my visit to Vietnam. The Sakya Vietnam Center members under the direction of Mr. Tho Luu and Ms. Hong, President of the Center gave Ani Rinpoche, Jetsunma Aloki, Jetsunma Mamaki, Dagmo Chimey and myself an incredible VIP reception when we arrived at Saigon airport on December 30, 2018. Dagmo Chimey and I each received huge bouquets of orchids. The weather was a balmy 88 degrees. We were all excited to be in Ho Chi Minh City/Saigon because the next day we would be welcoming His Eminence Khondung Asanga Vajra Rinpoche.

A little history about the Vietnam Sakya Center: A few decades ago, His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang and his devoted student, Tho Luu discussed the establishment of a dharma center in Vietnam. H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang sanctified this agreement in 1995 and gave the center a Tibetan name, Sakya Tsechen Shiday Choling aka Sakya Vietnam Center. Subsequently, on several occasions Tho Luu tried to secure Dagchen Rinpoche a special visa to visit Vietnam and the center. However, those attempts were always denied by the government. Dagchen Rinpoche then decided in 2012 to send as his representatives, his grandson, Asanga Vajra Rinpoche, and his wife, Dagmo Kusho, to Vietnam. Lama Tashi Rinpoche from Taiwan and Lama Migmar, resident lama from Sakya Monastery accompanied them and together they went to Vietnam to consecrate Sakya-Vietnam Center’s property for the creation of the Long Tho Cremation Park. Long Tho Cremation Park would have on its site a Crematorium/Prayer Hall and also a prayer Temple for the Sakya-Vietnam Center members. During the Vietnam War, this area was a battlefield where hundreds
of thousands of North and South Vietnamese, Americans and soldiers from other Asian countries and civilians lost their lives. Now, with the blessings from H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang, H.H. the 42nd Sakya Trizin Rinpoche who visited in 2017 and H.E. Asanga Rinpoche (2019), it has been transformed from a place reminiscent of the devastating consequences of war to a blessed environment.

On December 31, 2018 H.E Khondung Asanga Vajra Rinpoche and entourage arrived at Saigon airport, Ho Chi Minh City. He was greeted with a VIP reception and a large “welcoming” banner.

Another “welcoming” event occurred at sunset time on that very day. Peering out of my hotel window, I saw auspicious “khatag” clouds! (clouds in auspicious scarf-like formations) They were beautiful.

That evening, Asanga Rinpoche, his family, Khenpo Jampa Tenphel Rinpoche and the remaining entourage were all invited to a delicious dinner at Ms. Hong’s famous vegetarian restaurant, “Hum Vegetarian Restaurant and Garden”. We had dishes like sautéed mushroom with wild betel leaf, sweet potato in spicy sauce, fresh ginseng and apple pot. At the end of the New Year Eve’s meal, Asanga Rinpoche was requested to usher in the New Year 2019 by opening a bottle of champagne.

On January 1, 2019 Tho Luu and the Center members took us on a sight-seeing tour of Ho Chi Minh City. Ho Chi Minh City is quite modern, full of cars and many, many scooters, in fact a sea of scooters! Do you dare to cross the street by yourself? FYI, they also have “Uber” or rather “Grab” or Grab bike scooter drivers, identified by their green shirts and helmets. In the city, we saw French Colonial style landmarks built in the 19th century—the Notre Dame Cathedral and their Central Post Office, which is in use even today. We also visited two museums a War museum, which housed war planes and a historical museum. In the historical museum, we learnt about the ancient bronze drums created by their ancestors around 600 BC. While on our walking tour, the guide noticed a rainbow around the sun (unusual to him). We all stopped and took pictures but to us Seattleites, we knew that this was H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang’s signature blessing.

Incidentally, Vietnam was controlled by China for 1,000 years and by the French for 100 years. Through the creative genius of the Vietnamese people—they have integrated both cultures with their own. This is especially recognized in their food. Vietnamese cuisine is delicious and incredible. Their food is delectable, exotic, scrumptious and artistic creations—yum!

Additionally, the Vietnamese people are so kind and generous. I saw no resentment towards Americans nor towards any other foreigners. It is a developing country on the fast track.

The Sakya-Vietnam Center Opening Ceremony officially began on January 2, 2019. However, preparations had begun weeks earlier. Khenpo Jampa Rinpoche arrived in advance to help the members set up the new Center Temple. Khenpo-la helped them select appropriate furnishings, set up appropriate banners, thankas, floral arrangements etc. for the auspicious instatement of H.E. Khondung Asanga Vajra Rinpoche, as Head Lama of Sakya-Vietnam Center aka Sakya Tsechen Shiday Choling. Four monks from Darjeeling Guru Sakya Monastery, India arrived a couple of weeks earlier to create 5 huge 3ft high gorgeous butter sculptures (tormas) for the Temple’s offering altar. The tormas were breathtaking-- so elaborate and delicate.
At around 9am on January 2nd, Asanga Vajra Rinpoche arrived at the Long Thọ Cremation Park/ Sakya-Vietnam Center site. Before entering the compound, he cut a ceremonial ribbon opening the gates to the new Temple. Upon entrance, a traditional Tibetan welcome for a high lama—umbrella, incense, gyalings, cymbals, drums and faithful students holding khatags greeted Asanga Rinpoche and his family: Ani Rinpoche, Jetsun Aloki, Jetsun Mamaki and Dagmo Chimey.

The Instatement Ceremony of HE Asanga Rinpoche as the Head Lama of the Sakya-Vietnam Center included a Long Life Tenshug ritual, Offerings of Seven Emblems by Geshe Kalsang Damdul, former Principal of the Buddhist Dialectics Studies in Dharamsala, India, offering of Eight Auspicious Symbols by Khenpo Ngawang Gyatso, abbot and principal of Rimbick, College, India and Mandala offerings from Thọ Luu, Khenpo Jampa Rinpoche, the Sakya-Vietnam Center and Sakya Monastery, Seattle. Speeches then followed: a welcome speech by Ms. Hong, President of the Center, the reading of congratulation letters from HE Dagmo Kusho, Sakya Phuntsok Phodrang, Seattle and Dajeeling Guru Sakya Monastery, India. Lastly, there was a speech by Venerable Thich Minh Vu.

In the afternoon, HE Asanga Rinpoche bestowed to all in attendance (400 people) Chenrezig and Mahamudra Combination initiation. The initiation was translated from Tibetan to Vietnamese by a young Vietnamese woman named Tenzin Pema. Pema has been studying Tibetan language at an Institute in Dharamsala, India for the past 5 years. At the conclusion, of Asanga Rinpoche’s visit, Pema returned to India to resume her studies.

On January 3, 2019 Asanga Rinpoche presided over the ceremony for the auspicious installation of H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang's holy relics into the Parinirvana Stupa. Following that ceremony, Asanga Rinpoche led the rituals for the consecration of the now holy Parinirvana Stupa. Asanga Rinpoche was assited by Khenpo Jampa Rinpoche; Khenpo Ngawang Gyatso, Geshe Kalsang Damdul, Lama Taga from Yilhung Lhagyal Monastery, Tibet, the four monks from Darjeeling Guru Sakya Monastery as well
as Asanga Rinpoche’s personal attendants Gen Nyima Tsering and Sopon Tashi Tenzing, and Lama Jamyang Gyalsten from Sakya Buddha Asham, New Delhi. Also attending the consecration of the stupa was Nyingmapa Tulku Ugyen Choephel Rinpoche from Mindrolling Monastery in India along with his entourage of five monks. While the ceremony was progressing, Sopon Tashi Tenzing, Asanga Rinpoche’s attendant spotted the signature “rainbow around the sun”—once again, a glorious blessing from HH Dagchen Dorje Chang. In the afternoon, Guru Puja prayers were recited by all.

The next day at the Crematorium/Prayer Hall site across from the new Temple, a Mahavairochana or Kunrig puja was held. The event was presided over by Asanga Rinpoche and Khenpo Jampa Rinpoche led as Dorje Lopon. Kunrig is an elaborate prayer service especially beneficial for the deceased.

On January 5, 2019 at the same location, Crematorium/Prayer Hall, Asanga Rinpoche presided over the Vajrapani Bhutadamara Fire Puja for removing obstacles. A huge fire pit was created for this ceremony. Asanga Rinpoche offered ladles full of oil throughout the puja and everyone else participated by offering—mounds of various kinds of grains, grasses, seeds and other fire puja substances. The fire reached at least 5 feet high—awesome!

In the afternoon, Asanga Rinpoche, Ani Rinpoche, the Jetsunmas, Dagmo Chimey, Khenpo Jampa and I went back to Ho Chih Minh City. We met Ms. Hong, Tho Luu and the rest of the members in a newly purchased apartment. This place is the “local site” for the Sakya-Vietnam center members to practice. This apartment is closer than the Long Tho Cremation Park Temple, which is a 1.5 hour drive away from the city. Asanga Rinpoche gave a long discourse on the meaning and merits of taking refuge which was translated by Pema. Rinpoche also gave refuge to several students initiating them to the path of becoming a true Buddhist.

The following day, we all (at least 50 people) went on a Fish release. Huge bags of fish were released into the waters of the Saigon River outside of the harbor. It was a good feeling to be able to do something like this the first week of the 2019 New Year.

Well, all good things come to an end---on January 7, 2019 HE Asanga Rinpoche and his attendants Gen Nyima and Sopon Tashi Tenzin returned to India along with the monks of Guru Sakya Monastery. However, we hope to see them again in July, 2019 for Sakya Molam, Seattle!
On January 18-19, 2019, students gathered at Sakya Monastery to receive the very auspicious teaching on the Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma given by Khenpo Jamyang Chopal on his first visit to Seattle.

Venerable Khenpo Jamyang Chopal joined the Dzongsar Khyentse Chokyi Lodro Institute, India in 1999. Under the guidance of the late respected Khenchen Kunga Wangchuk and other prominent masters, he studied the five volumes: 1) logic, 2) madhyamika, 3) prajnaparamita 4) abhidharma-kosha, 5) vinaya (monastic discipline). In 2002, 2005 and 2007, he successfully obtained his Madyama, Shastra and Masters degrees respectively. In 2013, he received the certificate of Khenpo (Doctor of philosophy) from H.E. Khyentse Dzongsar Jamyang Norbu. In 2015, due to his knowledge and position, he was appointed as a special Instructor for H.E Sakya Khöndung Abhaya Vajra Rin-
poche and currently remains as his Personal Tutor while simultaneously, also teaching at the Institute. Khenpo Jamyang began his teaching by expressing his joy and enthusiasm for the opportunity to teach at Sakya Monastery before a western audience for the first time. He conveyed his gratitude and kind greetings to H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche, H.E. Abhaya Rinpoche, H.E. Dagmo Kusgo, Dagmo Lhanze, and the audience who share a connection directly or indirectly with H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya Rinpoche and Kyabgon Rinpoche (H.H. Sakya Trichen Rinpoche). Khenpo Jamyang also thanked the translator, Geshe Jamyang Tsultrim, who is himself a learned and accomplished teacher.

Khenpo Jamyang stated his hope that this teaching would be helpful for students in the next lifetime and also beneficial in this lifetime, especially if the mind is disturbed and in stressful times.

The source of this teaching topic is due to a request by H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche.

According to common Buddhist teachings there are 3 different types of teachings originating from the Three Turning of the Wheel of Dharma:

1. 1st Turning of the Wheel of Dharma: Taught by the Buddha in Varanasi, the teaching relates to the Four Noble Truths
2. 2nd Turning of the Wheel of Dharma: Taught by the Buddha on Vulture Peak, the teaching explains emptiness, or the absence of characteristics
3. 3rd Turning of the Wheel of Dharma: Taught by the Buddha in Vaishali, the teaching focuses on distinguishing between the first two teachings

In Tibetan, the Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma is referred to as Kha Korlo Sum. Kha means sutra. Sutra, in this context is the actual speech of the historical Buddha. In the sutras, Buddha explains what is to be discarded and what is to be adopted. Korlo means wheel. In this context the meaning of wheel is the Path that helps us to achieve higher rebirth and liberation, or nirvana. The Path is similar to a wheel. In ancient times, great rulers when they had contact with enemies, wheels were used to defeat them. Wheels are thus effective in terms of time (speed) and target (goal). The Buddhist Path assists us to go through our journey from Path to Result and swiftly achieve liberation and better rebirth.

Khenpo Jamyang explained why there are there only 3 turnings. It is because the audience of the teaching can be summarized into 3 capacities: individuals with lesser, middling and superior intelligence. Here, intelligence does not pertain to being ‘smart’ or ‘dumb’, but rather an individual’s karmic predisposition to receive and practice the teachings. Some people may be extremely intelligent from an academic perspective but they may not have the merit to hear or understand all of the Buddha’s teachings. This is why there is no fourth of fifth wheel of dharma.

1. The 1st turning of the wheel of Dharma is for individuals with more concrete intelligence and is presented in terms of the Four Noble Truths. The primary purpose of Four Noble Truths is overcoming suffering and freedom from the 3 downfalls (3 lower realms) in order to achieve better rebirth and liberation.
2. The 2nd turning of the wheel is for individuals with middling capacities. The emphasis is on understanding emptiness through analysis and renouncing the self cherishing mind.
3. The 3rd turning of the wheel is for individuals with the most advanced capacity or intelligence. The purpose is to achieve enlightenment through understanding the Middle Way.

1st Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

In order to be free from suffering we first have to understand suffering. Thus the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths:

1. There is suffering
2. There is a cause to suffering
3. There is an end to suffering (cessation)
4. There is a path to the end of suffering

Khenpo Jamyang explained in detail how each of the Four Noble Truths have four attributes and that understanding the sequential order of the Four Noble Truths is necessary in order to liberate ourselves from suffering. For example, if we get sick we recognize we have sudden illness (1st Noble Truth). We then try to find the source of the illness (2nd Noble Truth). When we achieve relief from sickness this is the Truth of Cessation (3rd Noble Truth). When we know the disease is treatable, this is the Truth of the Path (4th Noble Truth).

In this way, through understanding the Four Noble Truths,
we may not eliminate the source of suffering right away but if we persist long term we can overcome the sources of suffering. To achieve cessation, it is important to engage with the wisdom that realizes selflessness. There is no other effective method for achieving cessation. The 2nd Turning of the Wheel of Dharma addresses the wisdom of realizing emptiness.

2nd Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

The 2nd Turning of the Wheel of Dharma is for the person of middling capacity – the teaching is suitable for individuals with a direct connection with the topic or someone exposed to this concept of emptiness. Realization of emptiness is based on analysis, not on faith.

The meaning of emptiness of all phenomena doesn't mean nihilism. The 1st Turning explains suffering and happiness exist but in the 2nd Turning, all phenomena when analyzed, things don't exist inherently. Through analysis we can't find the thing as we perceive it. For example, a table. If we don't analyze the table, what we see is a table. But if we engage with thorough analysis the parts of the table (legs, top, edges etc.), we can't find any substantiality to the table. This is called emptiness of table in itself. All objects can be analyzed this way.

Through this kind of analysis we can eliminate self-grasping which is the root cause of all suffering.

3rd Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

In the 1st Turning of the Wheel of Dharma the teaching explained that things exist, for example suffering and happiness; that our experiences exist. The 2nd Turning of the Wheel of Dharma explains that things do not exist. The 3rd Turning of the Wheel of Dharma explains the “Middle View”, free from both existence and non-existence.

Each of the 4 Buddhist philosophical schools has its own commentary on which Turning of the Wheel of Dharma is definite/literal and which Turning is provisional. “Provisional” means that is should not to be taken literally, it is context-dependent. The Great Exposition School considers the 1st Turning of the Wheel of Dharma as definitive. The remaining two are provisional. The Madhyamika School views the 1st Turning and the 3rd as provisional. The 2nd Turning is seen as definitive. The Mind Only School sees the 1st and 2nd Turning as provisional and the 3rd Turning as definitive.

Khenpo Jamyang’s personal basis of understanding the Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma is from the teachings of Arya Deva. Arya Deva was a 3rd century Indian scholar and a disciple of Nagarjuna. In Arya Deva’s text book, “Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way” he explains that in the 1st Turning teaches how to transform negative karma through understanding the law of causality and through the accumulation of merit. The result of accumulation of wholesome deeds prevents rebirth in lower realms and leads to higher rebirth as human. The 2nd Turning is to actualize liberation; to transform self-grasping by realizing emptiness. The 3rd Turning requires one to abandon all views. It means being free from views of existence or non-existence – free from all extremes. The 3rd Turning is needed because some people may grasp the 2nd Turning of the Wheel of Dharma as nihilism which becomes an obstacle to enlightenment.

It is important to reflect and understand the root of suffering, which is self-grasping. Analyzing the self-cherishing mind as well as analyzing the mind that cherishes others is important. To study and to understand this leads to an altruistic mind. To contemplate, analyze and engage in Dharma practice brings benefit in the present and the future.

To contemplate, analyze and engage in dharma practice brings benefit in the present and the future.
On February 2nd 2019, H.E. Khöndung Avikrita Vajra Rinpoche bestowed the Maitreya initiation from the lineage of the Indian master Asanga’s pure vision. Rinpoche described Maitreya as the bodhisattva who made the determination to realize the Dharma and keep it relevant for our future. Lord Buddha Shakyamuni prophesized that Maitreya will be the future Buddha, abiding in the Tushita Heaven until the Dharma has faded from our world. Maitreya will then ascend to the World of Endurance to teach the Dharma.

The initiation that Rinpoche bestowed was intended to awaken the Maitreya within us. Reciting the Majestic Aspiration of Maitreya, Rinpoche explained, is a way to bring all the factors of the Mahayana to the forefront of our minds so, by reciting Maitreya’s words, which include the entire Mahayana Path, we will attain bodhi.

Rinpoche told the story of how this initiation originated with the fourth century Indian Mahapandita Asanga. Asanga was receiving an empowerment from his guru. At the time during the empowerment when it came to offer a flower in the sand mandala, the flower landed on the side figure of Maitreya. This was a portent that it would be beneficial for Asanga to meditate on Maitreya. Therefore, he meditated on the Maitreya practice for many years in caves.

Rinpoche explained that the Vajrayana is for those who have so much love and compassion that they resolve to save all of their loved ones and all sentient beings. He reflected that Asanga had an incredible brain – he had memorized all of the sutras and texts, but he knew that he hadn’t realized the transcendent meaning. Therefore, he undertook the Vajrayana practice of Maitreya in twelve years of retreat that didn’t seem to bear fruit. Upon leaving the retreat, while he was walking down the mountain he saw a dog with a wound that was infected with maggots and felt great compassion. The dog then disappeared and became Maitreya, and Asanga realised that this one moment of compassion transformed everything.

This Maitreya initiation that Rinpoche bestowed came from Asanga’s pure vision. He explained that while our true nature is Buddhahood, we don’t recognize it because the impact of our afflictions overwhelms us. Having recog-
nized the root of our problem, who can help us? Only a perfectly complete Buddha, an unconditioned being with boundless love has the knowledge and skill to help us. The medicine is the Holy Dharma. The Sangha are the nurses to our healing.

Although Maitreya is the future Buddha, Rinpoche cautioned that we can’t wait around for him to solve our problems. In the ultimate reality we are already Buddhas. We have to embrace the determination that we can be Maitreya here and now. The most powerful meditation is that of love and compassion. We need to clear every trace of aggression from our hearts and so, by practicing, we bring benefit to ourselves and others just like Maitreya.

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**Marici Fellowship Winter Sharing Event**

On February 2nd 2019 the Marici Fellowship in Seattle held the second Day of Caring By Sharing event. Led by His Eminence Sakya Khondung Avikrita Rinpoche and attended by His Eminence Sakya Khundung Abhaya Rinpoche and Her Eminence Jamyang Dagmo Kusho Sakya, the event brought support and comfort to hundreds of people on the streets of Seattle.

More than 60 volunteers were on hand to join in the compassionate activities, which included filling 700 bags with winter essentials like knit hats and warm socks, preparing 500 warm and nutritious meals, and collecting hundreds of pounds of food for donation to local food banks. Volunteers accompa-
H.E. Dagmo Kusho’s Birthday Celebration

speech by David Spiekerman, March 2019

In the high country of eastern Tibet known as Kham over 80 years ago, a baby girl was born who eventually would be absolutely instrumental in transforming the spiritual lives of thousands of human beings across Mother Earth. With the loving guidance of her husband and root guru, the great Sakya throne holder His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang, this baby girl would become a powerful Tibetan Buddhist lama who would accomplish in countless ways the qualities and activities of a bodhisattva.

Dear Dagmo Kusho, today we celebrate your birthday in order to acknowledge the profound and generous contributions that you have made to all of us in our Buddhist-inspired quest for enlightenment.

Dagmo Kusho, we truly thank you for being the closest and most faithful and fearless disciple of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang. You are an embodiment and inspiration of the powerful merit accumulated as the direct karmic result of serving a great Buddhist master. Especially, you always have encouraged girls and women to be fearlessly determined to practice the holy Dharma and have taught them that the karmic benefits of their active devotion to the holy Dharma are identical to the devotion and practice of boys and men.

Dagmo Kusho, we thank you for giving birth and raising to maturity five sons and fathers of the next generation of Sakya throne holders. We can not emphasize enough how essential and vital have been your loving kindness, compassion, and wisdom in nurturing and protecting your Sakya Dungseys.

As Dagmo Kusho’s great uncle Ngawang encouraged and protected her when she was a small child in Kham, and as
Birthday, continued from page 11

His Holiness Jigdral Dzogschen Dorje Chang instructed her in the Dharma as an adult over THEIR long and fruitful lives together, so now Her Eminence Dagmo Kusho offers us her guidance and protection with the essential caveat that the power of this protection depends entirely on our faithful devotion to the practice of the holy Dharma that she has magnificently demonstrated over eighty years.

Dagmo Kusho, in your self-effacing, modest, and charming disposition that is grounded in the diamond-like clarity of your mind, you have become a supreme and shining example of what a realized human being looks like.

We are eternally grateful that you, Dagmo Kusho, for your willingness to share your hard-earned wisdom with so many of us. Although your dear Great Uncle Ngawang prophesized great things for you, let's make no mistake, it was your tireless and warm service and diligent practice of the Holy Dharma that allowed you to fulfill your dreams and promise.

Dagmo Kusho, may your life continue to bless and benefit countless sentient beings. Mother Tara, we love you forever!

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Recent Activities of H.E. Avikrita Rinpoche and H.E. Abhaya Rinpoche – Spring

by Abhaya Vajra Sakya, April 2019

Following our visit to Seattle in the winter, Avikrita Vajra Rinpoche and I, along with our parents and attendants, made a short visit to Thailand where we went on pilgrimage to holy temples and had some time for rest.

Upon returning back to India, I flew to Bodhgaya with my parents to receive my full bhikshu ordination vows from His Eminence Luding Khenchen Rinpoche on February 19th, coinciding with the holy Day of Miracles. With His Eminence was also his nephew, Luding Khen Rinpoche who helped with the ordination as well. On February 20th, Avikrita Vajra Rinpoche and I joined the Khenpos and teachers of Dzongsar Institute along with Jetsun Kunga Trinley Palter on a ten-day pilgrimage in Sri Lanka led by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyenste Rinpoche. Travelling through the beautiful country on a bus, we visited numerous holy sites and temples, climbed up the staggeringly high Sri Paada (an experience I'll never forget – or repeat), learned about Sri Lankan culture and even managed to enjoy ourselves at the beach at the end of our stay.
Returning back to Delhi in the beginning of March, I left early for Dzongsar Institute to take the year-end exams which were delayed last year and so took place at the beginning of this school year, while Avikrita Rinpoche travelled to Dehradun to receive the Three Wrathful Ones empowerment from His Holiness Sakya Gongma Trichen Rinpoche. After the empowerment and paying a visit to His Eminence Luding Khenchen Rinpoche as well as Jetsun Chime Luding who was there at the time, and His Eminence Asanga Vajra Rinpoche, Avikrita Rinpoche returned to Dzongsar Institute, starting his duties as class teacher of the 2nd grade by teaching Candrakirti’s Madhyamakavatara. As if that wasn’t enough work on his hands, he has also started receiving teachings on the most important Sakya commentaries on the tantras by our ancestors Lobpon Sonam Tsemo and Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen from Ven. Khenpo Lungrig Senge, a highly respected teacher of the Vajrayana.

On March 31st, there was the annual event that took place here at Dzongsar called the Grand Spring Rigter Dharma Activity, where all the main Sakya colleges in India come together to debate on the subject of pramana (epistemology) for two weeks, using Sakya Pandita’s Pramanayuktanidi (Treasury of Epistemology) as a source material.

On April 3rd, Avikrita Rinpoche left for Delhi to attend the Global Launch of SEE (Social, Emotional and Ethical) Learning which was hosted by The Dalai Lama Foundation, Emory University of Atlanta Georgia and our friends at Vana Foundation. Avikrita Rinpoche was special guest of honor and was greeted warmly by His Holiness upon arrival. The conference lasted until the 6th.

Soon after the event, on April 14th, we made our annual visit to Tso Pema (Rewalsar in Himachal Pradesh) to coincide with the tenth day of the lunar calendar, which is Guru Padmasambhava’s special day of the month. Along with some Khenpos and monks from Dzongsar and other monasteries, we first went straight to Guru Rinpoche’s holy cave, hidden above the lake, where we performed the Guru Dorje Rigter Dharma Activity.
Drakpa Tsal puja including tsok and the special Prayers in Seven Chapters, led by Avikrita Rinpoche himself for the clearing of obstacles and the welfare of all sentient beings. Previously we weren’t able to perform this puja properly, not having the necessary initiations, but now that Rinpoche recently bestowed the pertaining empowerment and transmissions, we were able to perform it properly according to the wish of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang who told us to revive the puja for the Phuntsok Phodrang.

The next morning, Avikrita Rinpoche bestowed the life empowerment of Princess Mandarava, one of the main consorts of Guru Rinpoche, at the Nyingma monastery next to the lake of Tso Pema to a gathering of nearly a thousand people. Before the empowerment, Rinpoche gave an extensive preliminary Dharma teaching and afterwards encouraged the people on the importance and mindset of praying for His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s long life. Rinpoche also gave everyone a copy of his new book in Tibetan, which is an anthology of prayers to recite when on pilgrimage at Tso Pema.

While Rinpoche was bestowing blessings on the hundreds of people after the empowerment, I managed to sneak out in the midst of all the buzz and meet up with Marici Fellowship volunteers to lead the cleanup of the park area surrounding the lake. Our team managed to thoroughly scour the park of garbage, leaving no stone unturned, with Rinpoche joining us at the end once he finished blessing everyone for one last circumambulation around the holy lake.

After that busy and auspicious morning, we returned immediately back to cozy Dzongsar Institute where we’ve been residing until now, spending half our time studying and the other half pretty much playing with our new puppy Kila!
On April 19-20, 2019, Sakya Monastery welcomed Venerable Khenpo Choying Dorjee, who is visiting Seattle from the Dzongsar Institute in India, to give a special three-part teaching on Nagarjuna’s Precious Garland. The Precious Garland of Advice for the King (Sanskrit: Rajaparikatha-ratnamala) was written by Nagarjuna and belongs in his collection of advice texts. The root text is composed of five chapters, each with 100 verses. This is the most complete Shastra (work of scripture) ever written by Nagarjuna himself.

Khenpo Choying Dorjee is the Head Principle of Dzongsar Institute in India and appointed as teacher of H.E. Sakya Khöndung Avikrita Rinpoche. He received his Khenpo title in 2002 and received his Khenpo Degree, which is the equivalent to a PhD in Buddhism, in 2004. It was an honor and a privilege to have with us such a learned and accomplished teacher.

After reflecting on bodhicitta and reminding us that our sole motivation to practice the Dharma is only for the purpose of benefiting all sentient beings, Khenpo Choying said he would set out to answer five questions during the course of the teaching:

1. **What is the principle of basic, ultimate, and non-theoretical emptiness?**
2. **How do we counter the teachings of the four madrasas?**
3. **What is the root cause of suffering?**
4. **What is the principle of the ultimate nature of emptiness?**
5. **What is the nature of the genuine reality of the body, speech, and mind?”**
1. Who is the author?
Nagarjuna's biography is extraordinary. According to Khenpo Choying there have been many great masters since the time of the Buddha but none of them compare to Nagarjuna. There are famous masters in the Paramitayana tradition and famous master in the Vajrayana tradition but Nagarjuna is the only master who is famous in both traditions. In the Nalanda tradition he was even considered to be a second Buddha. Why? It was not because he lived for 600 years or that he is the only person besides Shakyamuni Buddha with the 32 major and 80 minor marks of a Buddha. It was not because he performed miracles such as ending a 12-year famine or using alchemy to turn metal into gold or the fact that he built over a million temples. King Asoka also did this. The Buddha prophesied Nagarjuna would be the one to hold his teachings after being asked by Manjushri. But even this does not make him so important. Others have also been prophesied by the Buddha. What makes Nagarjuna a second Buddha is that he understood interdependent origination and he explained it. Nagarjuna composed what he understood with scripture and logic through three collections or baskets:
   1. Collection of discourse/advice
   2. Collection of hymns or praises
   3. Collection of logic

Nagarjuna's Precious Garland falls into the first category, the collection of discourse or advice.

2. For whom was the Precious Garland composed?
The verses were composed for Nagarjuna's friend, the King but also for all of us.

3. Which category of teaching is it?
According to the type of homage made by the translator, the Precious Garland falls into the Sutrayana system of teachings.

4. What is it about?
The 500 verses address two matters: the highest state of
rebirth and elevation to the highest good.

5. What is the purpose?
Nagarjuna wrote these verses out of compassion for the sake of sentient beings. He wrote it for us to attain enlightenment.

What is the highest state of rebirth? Rebirth in the three upper realms is the result of merit. Here, human rebirth is the goal because only with the precious human rebirth is there opportunity to receive dharma teachings. In the heaven realms there is less opportunity because there is less suffering. Beings need some suffering in order to be motivated to practice dharma. In order to attain a precious human rebirth, complete with leisure time and physical endowments, one must practice the 16 types of dharma for higher rebirth.

What is the highest good? Enlightenment. There are 3 types of enlightenment: small, intermediate and full. The small enlightenment is that of an arhat. Intermediate is the pratyetekabuddha enlightenment. Full enlightenment is that of a Buddha. In order to gain the fruit of enlightenment we need to prepare for our future rebirth because it is difficult to attain enlightenment in just one life.

Khenpo Choying Dorje says that all of the Buddha's teachings are about these two topics.

Regarding precious human life, it is necessary to distinguish human life from the precious human life. In order to attain a precious human life where we have the leisure to practice the dharma and the physical faculties to understand the dharma, we need two things: devotion and wisdom.

Khenpo Choying spent some time discussing the meaning of devotion because there are many misunderstandings as a result of translating the word, cultural context and so forth.

Devotion, or faith is generally categorized into 3 types:
1. Faith resulting from admiration of the Three Jewels; one likes to listen to the dharma. One is pleased with what one hears and sees.
2. Aspiring faith: one aspires to be like the Buddha and the Arya Sangha.
3. The faith of conviction: one has confidence in the
Three Jewels.

For complete devotion, one needs all three. When one has the qualities of joy, confidence and hope, this is the real quality of an Arya. It is important for us to examine whether our devotion is pure or not. One has to make clear one's goal. The purpose for practicing dharma can't be just for oneself or just for this life. How do we check if our devotion is pure? Is it devotion or attachment? Examples of wrong devotion is blind devotion, such as following the teachings because of one's culture or because one's parents believe in it. Or because of “energy” – it feels good. Blind devotion is related to worldly things.

The 6th verse addresses devotion. Devotion needs to be unshakable, even when disturbing emotions arise. If we give up the dharma because of fear; out of fear of an evil king, for example, our devotion is not strong enough. We have to remember to continually renew our vow of devotion. Gradually we will overcome negative emotions in this way.

No. 6. One who does not neglect the practices
Through desire, hatred, fear, or bewilderment
Is known as one of faith,
A superior vessel for definite goodness.

Devotion in the mother of spiritual qualities; it is the container of nirvana. Without a mother there are no children. Without devotion there are no spiritual qualities. All pujas and practices are for the purpose of developing devotion and wisdom.

On the second day of the teaching, Khenpo Choying summarized each of the chapters.

Nagarjuna's Precious Garland is very suitable for lay practitioners, for example it gives very detailed instructions on how to rule a country. It is good business advice for companies and governments.

The first chapter talks about Dharma for elevation. If the goal is not for the next life, then any practice is not really dharma. If we are attached to this life, we are not dharma practitioners. The ultimate goal of the Dharma teachings is to achieve liberation. However, first we need the precious human life so we have an opportunity to gain wisdom.

The 7th verse gives a definition of ‘wise one’.

No. 7. Having analyzed well
All deeds of body, speech, and mind,
Those who realize what benefit self and others
And always perform these are wise.

The 11th verse describes how to prepare for a higher state of rebirth by practicing the 16 Dharmas and abandoning the 10 non-virtues.

No. 11. Practice is not done by just
Mortifying the body,
For one has not forsaken injuring others
And is not helping others.

In order to attain the ‘highest good’ one needs to gain wisdom. Here wisdom means to understand the truth, i.e. what is the nature of phenomenon. The root of all samsara is self-clinging. Therefore, we need to abandon self-clinging. When we analyze, no self can be found. It is a baseless idea. Everything is dependent on causes and conditions. This is the meaning of emtpiness.

Khenpo Choying then went on to explain the 2 traditions of Madhyamika philosophy which provides an explanation of Prajnaparamita sutras. There is no difference in the view between these 2 traditions. The difference is in the explanation of dependent arising.

Verse 27. Self-clinging becomes the cause of all disturbing emotions. As long as we believe that our 5 aggregates exist inherently, we will have self-clinging. If we cling to a self, then it means that we also cling to other. This gives rise to duality. The view of self and other gives rise to anger and other disturbing emotions which in turn lead to all karma. Karma is the cause of rebirth, aging, sickness and death.

No. 27. By him who speaks only to help beings,
It was said that all beings
Have arisen from the conception of I
And are enveloped with the conception of mine.

Verse 28. From the perspective of knowing things as they truly are, there is never “I” or “mine”. If self-clinging is a valid cognition, then we can't remove it. Because self-clinging is false, we have a chance for liberation. This makes Buddhism different from other religions.

No. 28. “The I exists, the mine exists.”
These are wrong as ultimates,
For the two are not [established]
By a thorough consciousness of reality just as it is.


No. 30. Having seen thus the aggregates as untrue,
The conception of I is abandoned,
And due to abandoning the conception of I
The aggregates arise no more.

No. 31. Just as it is said
That an image of one’s face is seen
Depending on a mirror
But does not really exist [as a face],

The “I” does not truly exist. When we analyze, “I” is not there. But when we do not analyze it is there. We might understand this concept intellectually but we have not

habituated this wisdom. Understanding this concept is the beginning. Then we meditate. The literal translation of the Tibetan word “Gom” which means ‘to meditate’, is “familiarize”. Why do we meditate? To familiarize or habituate the concept of selflessness.

In order to have success in meditation we need certainty. Doubt is the biggest hindrance to meditation. There are several ways to gain certainty:
1. Analyzing
2. Having confidence in the Buddha
3. Receiving signs, such as getting goosebumps

In summary, Nagarjuna’s Precious Garland addresses two things: elevation (to higher rebirth) and the highest good (enlightenment). Devotion is the cause for elevation. Wisdom is the cause for attaining the highest good.

All dharma practice is for the purpose of attaining these two. These two subdue disturbing emotions. When one subdues the mind there is victory.
H.E. Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche Bestows Mahakala Initiation

by Alyssa McFarland, April 2019

His Eminence Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche visited Seattle, WA April 24-26 and bestowed the Mahakala initiation at Sakya Monastery on April 25. H.E. Gyana Vajra Rinpoche is the son of His Holiness Sakya Trichen Rinpoche (the 41st Sakya Trizin) and younger brother of His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin. On March 29, 2020, His Eminence Gyana Vajra Rinpoche will be enthroned as the 43rd Sakya Trizin.

Mahakala is one of the most revered Tibetan protector deities. His purpose is to protect the Dharma and Dharma practitioners and to help in overcoming negative obstacles on one’s path to enlightenment.

Before starting the initiation, H.E. Gyana Vajra Rinpoche said that the motivation for taking an initiation, or any practice, puja or tsok, is very important. The motivation to benefit all sentient beings brings merit and without which, you cannot achieve enlightenment. He advised us to always include all sentient beings in our prayers, to increase merit. Also he told us that all the deities are Buddha, none is better or more powerful than any other; they just appear in different forms because some might people relate to one deity and someone else might relate to a different deity and practice, just as different people have different tastes in movies.
Worldwide memorial ceremonies were held in honor of H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang's parinirvana. Often in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, more emphasis is placed on a Lama's parinirvana than their birth. The reasons for commemorating a Lama's passing are twofold: 1) disciples are celebrating the guru's lifetime accomplishments, and 2) they are supplicating for the Lama's rebirth to benefit all beings. This year, 2019, is the third anniversary of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang's parinirvana. Memorial events were held by devotees all over the world including: Seattle, India, Nepal, Taiwan, Hong Kong, New York and Hawaii.

SEATTLE

For the Royal Sakya Phuntsok Phodrang Family and Sakya Monastery, year 2019 is auspicious because it marks a time when many of H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang's wishes have been or are being realized:

2. Consecration of the H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang memorial stupa in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
3. Completion of life size statues of H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang in Tibet, Hong Kong, China, Nepal and India
5. Completion of Holy tsa tsa (relics made from blessed ashes and bones of H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang)
6. Beginning of the construction of Sakya Monastery in Jaigon, India
7. Hosting the Monlam Festival for Peace in Seattle, July 12-14, 2019

H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang's parinirvana was on April 29, 2016 according to the western calendar or the 3rd month 22nd day of the Tibetan lunar calendar.

Hence, we honored the above milestones by celebrating H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang's memorial on two occasions: April 29, 2019 (western calendar date) and May 25 (lunar calendar date)-May 27, 2019. For both ritual ceremonies, the center of reverence was a domed, encased 4-inch holy tsa tsa relic of H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang.

The April 29th memorial to our beloved Guru was led by Omze, Ven. Khenpo Jampa Tenphel, Lama Migmar, Lama Kelsang, Gen Tashi Nyima, Lama Norbu and Ven. Lekshey.
The Guru Devotion practice was recited in the morning and afternoon. At the conclusion of the afternoon practice, an auspicious photo of the 35 Buddhas signed by H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang was distributed to all.

From May 25-27, 2019, the Chenrezi Drup Choe practice was recited for 3 days to honor H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang. Prayers were led in Tibetan by Dorje Lopon Khenpo Jampa. The ordained who assisted were Ven. Tulku Yeshi, Lama Migmar, Lama Kelsang, Gen Tashi Nyima, Lama Norbu and Lama Thupten Dhargye. In attendance also were H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang’s devoted wife H.E. Dagmo Kusho, their five sons: Khondung Minzu Rinpoche, Khondung Ani Rinpoche, Khondung Mati Rinpoche, Khondung Zaya Rinpoche and Khondung Sadu Rinpoche and members of the Dungseys’ Seattle families. H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang’s sisters, Jetsun Tsegen, Jetsun Chime and Jetsun Kunyang also participated. Other extended family members included H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang’s niece, Tsering Walgren and her husband Blaine Walgren, and Mangtho Gyatso (Jetsun Chime’s husband). Over the three days, in addition to our sangha members and the Seattle Tibetan community, H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang’s disciples from California, Indiana, Colorado and Vancouver, Canada also participated.

A most auspicious ceremony was held on Sunday, May 26, 2019. That morning H.E. Dagmo Kusho and the Sakya Phuntsok Phodrang Khondungs distributed holy tsa tsa pendants in the likeness of H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang to all the attendees about 180 devoted students. Over the last 3 years, the holy tsa tsas were made and prayed over by devoted Sakya monks and finally, the Eminent Sakya Khondungs. H.E. Ngor Luding Khen Rinpoche presided over hundreds of lamas, tulkus, and sangha members to consecrate and bless the holy tsa tsas. With faith and Guru devotion, the tsa tsa relics will bless you with all things good and will protect you.

After the three days of glorious prayers, a candlelight vigil was held on the final evening, May 27, 2019.

NEPAL/INDIA

His Eminence Avikrita Rinpoche arrived at Pema Ts’ál Sakya Monastic Institute in Pokhara, Nepal on May 23, 2019. From May 24th-May 26th to commemorate the 3rd Anniversary of the Parinirvana, his grandfather H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang, he led a three-day Vajrakilaya Drub Choe (grand puja). During that time, he also bestowed a Vajakila Torma Empowerment and gave a public talk. When he returned to New Delhi, India, he continued honoring Dagchen Dorje Chang’s memory by leading and dedicating an India-Marici Fellowship event to feed the poor.
His Eminence Abhaya Rinpoche and monks honored H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang’s memorial at Dzongars Institute through the recitation of the Guru Puja prayers.

His Eminence Asanga Rinpoche and sangha commemorated the 3rd Anniversary of the Parinirvana of H.H. Dagchen Dorje Chang on May 25, 2019 in Manali, India by performing the Lamdre Lama Chopa puja in the morning and protector deity puja in the afternoon, under many auspicious signs.

Gen Kungsang led 55 of the New Delhi Ashram monks in
RITES OF SPRING EVENT AND CEREMONY

by Alexa Berlow, May 2019

East West Books in Seattle hosted a global healing meditation and peace ceremony, “May the 4th Be With You”. The gathering was intended to introduce prayer and meditation methods from various cultural and spiritual traditions and practices, to cultivate personal and spiritual well-being, global peace, and healing.

The evening included a sound healing concert followed by a panel presentation of meditations and mantras from different cultural traditions represented in the Seattle area. Venerable Lama Kelsang Dukpa, representing Sakya Monastery, led the ‘Buddhist Compassion and Mantra Prayer,’ evoking the calm, even tone of concentration and emptiness inherent of the sacred phrase Om Mani Padme Hung.

Others in attendance included Murali Venkatrao, Ananda Center, Rabbi Ted Falcon, Bet Alef Meditation Synagogue, Imam Jamal Rahman, Interfaith Community Sanctuary, and Susan Dean, Underhill House. SoundStation performed the sound healing concert.

The event concluded with a candle offering and prayer for world peace. It was an evening filled with much peace, unity, and joy.

GESHE JAMYANG TEACHES ON THE “KING OF PRAYERS”

by Alyssa McFarland, June 2019

On June 22, 2019, Loppon Geshe Jamyang Tsultrim visited Sakya Monastery to give a two-part teaching on “The Aspiration of Samantabhadra,” also known as the “King of Prayers.” This prayer comes from a sutra when the Buddha was in Shravasti. Bodhisattva Samantabhadra (not to be confused with the primordial Samantabhadra) spoke these words to Sudana (a merchant’s son who was interested in Buddhism).

Geshe Jamyang explained that aspiration prayers are important because when we see all the suffering in the world, we tend to despair that we cannot solve it. Instead of this negative thinking, we should acknowledge the difficulty of the situation, and aspire that ourselves and others might overcome it. It is healing for ourselves to make an aspiration prayer, for example, praying “may homeless individuals find shelter, and may the hungry find food.”

The Aspiration of Samantabhadra can be summarized as an extensive seven-limb prayer. The three main concepts are: accumulation (of wholesome deeds), purification (of afflictive emotions and negative karma via the four powers)
and expansion (expanding wholesome deeds and restraining from unwholesome ones).

Geshe Jamyang went through the text giving explanations based on Commentary on Samantabhadra by the most venerable Khenpo Appey Rinpoche. He suggested reading the Aspiration of Samantabhadra verse by verse and contemplating its meaning. Geshe Jamyang provided an extensive printed outline, showing what each verse meant and how it fit into the larger whole. For example, reading the first eleven stanzas helps us accumulate the core wholesomeness that is to be dedicated through the first six limbs of the Seven Limb Prayer. Verse 12 summarizes and begins the dedication portion (the seventh limb), which comprises the rest of the prayer.

He clarified a few points which are easy to misunderstand. For example, in stanza 42 Samantabhadra is referred to as the “eldest son of the victorious Buddhas,” which means “senior student” not “biological son.” In stanza 49, where it says those reciting the prayer “will abandon all evil friends,” the emphasis is on transforming your life, not actually abandoning anyone (a bodhisattva would not abandon anyone, but sees everyone as their teacher, even “evil” people).

The reasons we read this prayer when people die are: a) recite it on behalf of the dead person so they can receive the merit, b) to process our own grief and loss, and c) to connect with the deceased person through our prayers.

He said that the main stanzas of the prayer are verses 12, 41, 42, 43, 44, 55, 56, 61, 62, 63. Of these, 12, 55 and 56 are the minimum that should be recited.

If one wishes, one can replace the word “I” in the prayer with the word “we,” while imagining that all beings are reciting with oneself.

We are very grateful to have had Geshe Jamyang come and give this informative and inspiring teaching!

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Verse 12
May whatever small amount of virtue I may have gained from prostrating, offering, confessing, rejoicing, requesting, and beseeching, be dedicated to attaining perfect enlightenment.

Verse 55
In whatever way valiant Manjushri and Samantabhadra know how to transfer merit, so do I dedicate all of my own virtues, that I might train to be like them.

Verse 56
Through this dedication, praised as supreme by the victorious Buddhas of the past, present, and future, I dedicate all of these roots of virtue to accomplishing the deeds of Samantabhadra.
Good morning to all women, men, girls, and boys who are happily bringing their engaging mindfulness to this auspicious occasion. On behalf of H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Dorje Chang and Sakya Monastery, I welcome you to our celebration of the 84th birthday of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

One day out of 365 days in a year, every year for more than 84 years, human beings, and especially Tibetans, on this planet have celebrated the birthday of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. A birthday celebration for His Holiness Dalai Lama is an opportunity for the human community to acknowledge with pure intention our loving connection and faithful respect for a man who lives his life in body, speech, and mind as a true bodhisattva.

His Holiness Dalai Lama's power to elicit our heartfelt desire to be happy does not come from force of arms, financial wealth, political governance, performance abilities as an elite athlete or entertainer, and any other worldly attainment or position. All of the worldly vehicles that propel other human beings to the peak of their power are not what create His Holiness Dalai Lama’s supreme power and popularity.

Rather, His Holiness Dalai Lama’s power rests entirely on his absolute faith over many lifetimes in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and on his practice arising from his incomparable motivation to free all beings from the sufferings of samsara. As a simple monk, he walks his talk without an ounce of doubt or hypocrisy. He bears no animosity or grudge against any other sentient being, including the Chinese government and mosquitoes, which have been pestering him for more than 7 decades.

His Holiness Dalai Lama has both the unique wisdom of recognizing every sentient being as his mother, father, sister, and brother and the exquisite skillful means of conveying with profound certainty that your happiness is essential to his happiness. His Holiness Dalai Lama possesses the radiant like quality of an unblemished mirror that reflects back to everyone in his presence their true nature of loving kindness and compassion.

Finally, His Holiness Dalai Lama reminds us over and over, that each of us has the innate capacity to attain the state of bliss that he radiates effortlessly. He embodies the majestic and magnanimous transformative power of the Buddhadharma as the supreme means to reach together total and complete enlightenment. Thank you, Your Holiness Dalai Lama, you have been our beloved, treasured, and living embodiment of Chenrezi for 84 years.
The Third North American Sakya Monlam for World Peace was hosted by the North American Sakya Monlam for World Peace Foundation and facilitated by the Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism. This historic event was held from July 12-14, 2019 at the Lynnwood Convention Center in Lynnwood, Washington, just north of Seattle. His Holiness the 41st Sakya Ghongma Trichen Dorjechang Rinpoche and His Holiness the 42nd Kyabgon Trizin Rinpoche presided over the ceremonies of this non-sectarian prayer festival for world peace. Many high lamas of the Sakya tradition were in attendance including Their Eminences Khöndung Avikrita Rinpoche, Khöndung Abhaya Rinpoche, Khöndung Asanga Rinpoche, and Her Eminence Jetsun Kushog Chimey Luding as well as many Tulkus, Khenpos and Lamas from various traditions who came from far and wide to participate in this auspicious event.

The Monlam Prayer Festival opened with a welcome ceremony for Their Holinesses Ghongma Trichen Rinpoche and Kyabgon Trizin Rinpoche by the assembly of Their Eminences the Khöndung Rinpoches, Her Eminence Jetsun Kushog Chimey Luding as well as the monastic and lay congregation. Devotees welcomed the procession of high lamas and their entourage with khatag offerings and traditional Tibetan songs and dances auguring auspiciousness.
The program began with a mandala offering by Khen Rinpoche Jampa Tenphel, the President of the North American Sakya World Peace Foundation and resident lama of Sakya Monastery, Seattle. Monlam aspiration prayers were led by His Holiness the 41st Ghongma Trichen Rinpoche and His Holiness the 42nd Kyabgon Trizin Rinpoche followed by supplication prayers to the Five Founders of the Sakya tradition, prayers to the lamas of the Sakya lineage and Supplication for the Quick Return of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Dorjechang Rinpoche. The prayers continued with numerous recitations of the Aspiration of Samantabhadra by all attendees.

The Butter Lamp Offering Prayer composed by His Holiness the 41st Ghongma Trichen Dorjechang Rinpoche concluded the prayer service.

The morning of day two was centered on the third parinirvana anniversary of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Dorjechang Rinpoche. Their Holinesses, Ghongma Trichen Dorjechang Rinpoche and Kyabgon Trizin Rinpoche unveiled “The Life and Legacy of H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya Dorjechang” a photo essay book documenting His Holiness’ journey to the west and creation of the Sakya Monastery in Seattle. The book was sponsored by the North American Sakya Monlam for World Peace Foundation and edited by Adrienne Chan, Coren Lindfield and John Connolly of Sakya Monastery. The beautiful hardcover book was distributed to all attendees. The remainder of the morning and afternoon sessions continued with recitations of the Aspiration of Samantabhadra prayer for world peace and again concluded with the newly composed Butter Lamp Offering Prayers.

In the evening, a Gratitude Dinner was held at the Lynnwood Convention Center honoring their Holinesses Ghongma Trichen Dorjechang Rinpoche and Kyabgon Trizin Rinpoche, their Eminences the Khöndung Rinpoches and Her Eminence Jetsun Kushog Chimay Luding. Also present were members of both the Dolma Phodrang and Phuntsok Phodrang families, Tulkus, Khenpos, lamas, generous sponsors, artistic performers and volunteers. Also in attendance was the Consul General of Canada, Mr. Brandon Lee and his wife Giovanna as special guests. The volunteers who worked hard to bring the three-day event to fruition were especially honored during this Gratitude Dinner with gifts and commendations for their hard work and dedication. A sumptuous dinner catered by the convention center was accompanied by traditional Tibetan music and dancing performed by local Tibetan children and artists.

The last day’s schedule began with the formal transfer of monlam committee members and their positions followed by a ceremony to inaugurate the Fourth North American Sakya World Peace Monlam Organizing Committee. The
Aspirations of Samantabhadra prayer chanted by all attendees concluded the morning session.

The final afternoon began with a ceremony of appreciation for all the generous sponsors of the monlam as well as a farewell ceremony for the Third Monlam Organizing Committee who finished their three years of service. Khen Rinpoche Jampa Tenphel gave a gratitude speech thanking all American and Canadian committee members involved as well as all the monlam volunteers. This was followed by a Rigsum Gonpo Empowerment (combined empowerment of Manjushree, Vajrapani and Avalokiteshvara) with dharma teachings by His Holiness Ghoonga Trichen Dorjechang Rinpoche. His Holiness welcomed all those gathered at the convention hall as well as those watching live from afar with warm greetings. His Holiness stressed the importance of praying for all sentient beings, all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the ten directions, constantly praying for their benefit of all. His Holiness said the world is very small and that we, as Mahayana practitioners need to pray for the limitless sentient beings to be free from suffering, the cause of suffering and to receive true happiness. The limit of sentient beings is equal only to the limit of open space, no exceptions including those close to us, far from us, known and unknown to us so that we all will be free from suffering and the causes of suffering. All sentient beings which include those who are friends as well as enemies. But in reality every sentient being in one lifetime or another have been our kind mothers who have helped us and protected us from many dangers. So it is our duty now to give them our love and support and to always think about all sentient beings of the six realms, especially those experiencing great sufferings, and try to practice with great merit. Then we dedicate whatever practice we are doing to attain full enlightenment for all sentient beings. His Holiness requested that we keep these thoughts in our minds while receiving this profound empowerment. Concluding this precious teaching, all attendees had the opportunity to present a khatag offering to His Holiness the
Attendees at the Third North American Sakya Monlam for World Peace at the Lynnwood Convention Center

Traditional Tibetan performers
41st Ghongma Trichen Dorjechang Rinpoche with deep gratitude in having received the triple empowerment, dharma teachings and his precious blessings.

The third and last day of the third North American Sakya Monlam for world peace in Seattle concluded with prayers for all sentient beings. During the course of the three-day event, the North American Sakya Monlam for World Peace provided accommodations, food and transportation for all the gathered monastic sangha. The Sakya Monastery was blessed to help facilitate and help organize this wonderful prayer festival with the special efforts of the Sakya Phuntsok Phodrang. There was the largest ever gathering of Khöndungs (Khön lineage holders) in the west which included all the five sons and grandsons of H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Dorjechang Rinpoche. The large gathering of the monastic and lay sangha filled the space with prayers of aspiration and many blessings. The large gathering of dharma practitioners focused on the common purpose of praying for the benefit of all sentient beings and for world peace at large was an uplifting experience and people left the three-day event with a smiles on their faces which in itself was a great achievement.

The Fourth North American Sakya Monlam for World Peace will be held at the Richmond Memorial Auditorium & Convention Center in San Francisco, California from July 17 – 19, 2020.

“Tsuktor Barwa Initiation” photo essay book

by Alyssa McFarland, July 2019

His Eminence Sakya Khöndung Avikrita Rinpoche bestowed the initiation of Tsuktor Barwa (in Sanskrit, Ushnishajvala) on July 17, 2019 at Sakya Monastery in Seattle, WA. Many people attended from around the world and the teaching and initiation was simultaneously translated into Chinese.

Tsuktor Barwa was taught by the Buddha in the Manjushri Root Tantra as an exceptionally powerful method for practitioners to clear obstacles, sickness, stress and negativity; and to promote well-being, success and positive qualities. Avikrita Rinpoche bestowed the full initiation from the lineage of the ancient Indian master Abhayakara Gupta.
From July 19-21, members of Sakya Monastery in Seattle and friends of the Marici Fellowship from many different countries came together for the first ever Marici Fellowship Summer Camp near Mount Rainier in Washington State. Everyone shared in early morning meditations, beautifully prepared vegetarian food, a Marici initiation, the debut of the fellowship communication workshop, a Marici fire puja, a Marici smoke offering, story-time from Rinpoche and Dagyum Chenmo around the camp-fire, and lots of fun activities. It was inspiring, beautiful, informative and fun!
During November 4 through November 10, 2019, Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism was very fortunate that our Resident Artist, Venerable Lama Migmar, single-handedly created a sand mandala of Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig in Tibetan). The public were invited to view it each day as the creation progressed. Lama Migmar diligently, patiently, and expertly accomplished this task with great precision and detail, and with meditational and artistic acumen.

The first day was a mathematically precise process of laying out a grid in red chalk to guide the shape of the mandala. The lines were created by string, covered in chalk and pulled taut. White chalk was used over that to create an outline of the design. Then he started laying sand from the inside of the mandala outward using a traditional instrument, a chak-pur.
kind of funnel with ridges, called a chak-pur.

Each day he gave a brief explanation about mandalas in general and about this particular one that he was constructing. Some of the points Lama Migmar made included our perspective when viewing the mandala. Though it appears on a flat surface, it is actually a building, the home palace of the meditational deity (yidam in Tibetan). We are looking down as if from a satellite into the building. Some mandalas have three stories, some two, and this one we were viewing was of one story.

Every part of the mandala is symbolic. At the very center is the seed syllable of Chenrezi. This is where the deity resides, and where all the prayers during the mandala’s creation are taken in. Chenrezi is surrounded by offerings. The six petal shapes surrounding the center represent the six realms of existence, and Chenrezi’s blessings flow to all of them. In each petal is a syllable of the mantra om mani padme hum.

Lama Migmar pointed out to us the four entrances to the palace in four directions: white for East, yellow for South, red for West, and green for North. Surrounding the palace are the offerings of water for washing, water for drinking, flowers, incense, lamps, perfume, food, and music. In each corner is a half-vajra and a crescent moon for protection. A black and yellow ‘fence’ of vajras also surrounds and protects the deity and lotus petals in the center. He indicated the outermost rings of lotuses, vajras, and the fire of wisdom.

Lama Migmar emphasized the meditational purpose for the benefit of all beings in creating this mandala of colored sand powder which glistened and sparkled making a beautiful sight.

On Sunday afternoon, a ritual ceremony led by our resident lamas was held to deconstruct the sand mandala. Lama Migmar conducted Chenrezi prayers to bless the mandala before the deconstruction began.

First the sand was all swept toward the middle, starting at the palace gates, in a ritual pattern. The lamas and students then traveled to Carkeek Park. Each person took home a small amount of the blessed sand, and the rest was dispersed into the ocean. Prayers of aspiration and dedication were recited to benefit all the creatures of the ocean and earth. The tradition of the dissolution of the sand mandala reminds us of the impermanence of all phenomena.